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AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE  
By Mme. H. de Rudder

## MME. DE RUDDER AND HER REMARKABLE EMBROIDERY

Every one knows how difficult it is to find an artist really deserving the name who has undertaken the study and practice of decorative art without having previously had extended experience in drawing, painting, and sculpture. Very few students feel, at the outset of their career, the charm of the applied art; few realize the delight it gives to its disciples. On the contrary, many ambitious workers, dazzled by the glory of painting and sculpture, "burn their wings" with that bright but deceiving flame, only to return afterward, disillusioned, to an art worthy of having attracted them at first. It is for that reason that one must congratulate the artists who are able to understand the high mission of the decorator, and who can appreciate the simple joys of this useful art.

Among these one must name Mme. de Rudder, who has succeeded in reviving the beautiful art of embroidery, and whose works are equal to the most exquisite productions created in the past. The career of this artist has been brief, but her abilities have rapidly developed. It was in the school of de la rue Poinçon, in Brussels, that Mme. de Rudder studied. Aside from her instruction in this establishment, she also received valuable lessons in drawing and in sculpture from Mlle. Maria de Rudder, who was herself a student under the tutelage of her brother, the well-known sculptor. But no



IL ÉTAIT UNE BERGÈRE  
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thought of utilizing the skill she had acquired, crossed the mind of the young girl until she married her teacher's brother, and became Mme. de Rudder. Then the young couple realized the charm of collaboration in art.

It was, however, only after several trials that they found the right course. Their first efforts were simple embroidery for chairs, sofas, and other pieces of house furniture — interesting work, of course, but giving no index to the rich harvest that resulted from their combined efforts. One day the artist thought that what she had done with the flowers and leaves she could do with the human figure as a *motif*. The first trials were satisfactory, and the road to success grew clearer daily. About this time a son was born to the painter Courtens, one of the intimate friends of the de Rudders, and Mme. de Rudder took the opportunity to present the artist with a design in embroidery intended to remind him of his painting "The Shower of Gold," an allegory of autumn, for which he had received the medal of honor. Taking a similar subject,



LA PRUDENCE  
By Mme. H. de Rudder



LE PRINTEMPS—EMBROIDERED PANEL

By Mme. H. de Rudder

Mme. de Rudder embroidered a "Shower of Flowers" in exquisite shades. Courtens, delighted with the gift, strongly advised the sculptor and his wife to enter the new field that lay before them so inviting.

The first result of this joint work was shown in 1894 at the Exposition Circle pour l'Art, in the form of a panel, called "The Eagle and the Swan." It was exhibited afterward at the Secession in Vienna, where it was purchased by a well-known amateur and connoisseur. Other works were produced in succession, each more interesting than its predecessor. Not daunted by difficulties that would have discouraged the most ambitious and audacious craftswoman, Mme. de Rudder took for a subject "The Fates," to decorate a screen. Aside from the artistic interest attaching to this work, it is remarkable for another quality. The artist yielded to the instinctive liking that she had for useful art—she ornamented a useful article—and in mastering the technical difficulties of her work, she created the new method called "re-embroidery." For the dresses of her "Fates," ancient silks were utilized for a background. Some of the pieces had moth-holes which necessitated the addition of "supplementary ornamental motives," embroidered on cloth to conceal the defects. The discovery of "re-embroidery" was the result of this enforced expedient.

This screen, finished in 1896, was exhibited at the Circle Artis-

tique, Brussels, where the mayor, M. Buls, saw it. Realizing the possibilities of the method, and the skill of the artist, he gave an order to Mme. de Rudder to decorate the Marriage Hall of the Hotel de Ville. This order was delivered in 1896. During this period Mme. de Rudder worked feverishly. About the same time that the order for the Hotel de Ville was given, she received from M. Van Yssendyck, architect of the Hotel Provincial, in Ghent, a commission to design and embroider six large allegorical panels. One of them represented "Wisdom," in the habiliments of Minerva, modernized, holding an olive branch. The five others were "Justice," holding a thistle, symbolizing law; "Eloquence," crowned with roses, and holding a lyre; "Strength," bending an oak branch; "Truth," crushing a serpent, and bearing a mirror and some lilies; and "Prudence," with the horn of plenty and some holly. These six panels are remarkable for the beautiful decorative feeling that suffuses their composition. The tricks of workmanship are varied, and all combine to give a wonderful effect. Contrary to the form of presenting the "Fates," all the figures are draped.

When not working on these important orders, as a recreation, Mme. de Rudder executed small panels—a cat, a marvel of minute and painstaking detail, a few little scenes illustrating some popular



L'ÉTÉ—EMBROIDERED PANEL  
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L'AUTOMNE—DÉTAIL

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themes, such as those expressed in the well-known French songs, "Il était une bergère" (There was a Shepherdess), "Au clair de la lune" (In the moonlight), "Nous n'irons plus au bois" (We shall not go to the wood any more).

The next important commission given to the artist was eight large panels for the Congo Free State. They were intended to ornament the Congo section at the Brussels exposition. These panels, which are now at the Museum of Tervueren, are very striking, measuring three yards in height by one and a half yards in width. They are pure applique, with the exception of the features, which are the only parts embroidered. The panels represent the "Triumph of Civilization over Barbarism." Some nude figures—negroes—are curiously worked out, and certain panels symbolical of fetishism possess a strangely mysterious power of fascination.

Having accomplished so much, Mme. de Rudder resolved to do still better work, and established her reputation more firmly by attempting still greater heights of decorative art. In other words, she determined to do what no other embroiderer had ever attempted before her time. She conceived the idea of illustrating the four seasons on panels two by three yards in dimensions. This crowning work was begun towards the close of 1896 and finished during the



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present year. Like the other large pieces these panels were executed with the assistance of M. de Rudder. The two artists seem to have concentrated all their efforts in the composition. All four panels are reproduced with this article. "Spring" is a picture of youth. Among scattered flowers, in a landscape glowing with color, a group of children are singing and dancing. One, larger than the rest, holds a little one who is frightened by the capers of a kid. Among iris, a species of lily, white swans are gliding. This is the central compo-



L'AUTOMNE—EMBROIDERED PANEL  
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sition. A large border (a poem in itself) surrounds the picture. At the upper part are the signs of the zodiac framed with mignonette. Swallows are passing and birds are building their nests. Glycines, a spring field-flower, adorn the sides vertically, while the lower border is filled with pond-lilies, and suggest a sedgy waterside.

In "Summer" the coloring is warmer. Harvesters are cutting the wheat, young people are bathing, and a shepherd boy is making love to his sweetheart, who is sitting near her flock among the flowers, with her faithful dog at her feet. Every minute as well as every bold detail of the work can be examined with the closest scrutiny without revealing the slightest deviation from the truth of nature.

The lilies, clematis, daisies, and thistles, the sunflowers and the richly glowing poppies, are marvelous replicas of these beauties of the field and dells. The same ideas and the same perfection of execution are visible in the borders. Wheat and daisies frame the signs of the zodiac, hops and wild roses fringe the extreme edges of the panel, and seaweeds, fishes, frogs, crabs, and turtles are shown in the frieze.

"Autumn," by consensus of critical opinion, is the best of the four. A young mother is nursing her baby, while a larger child

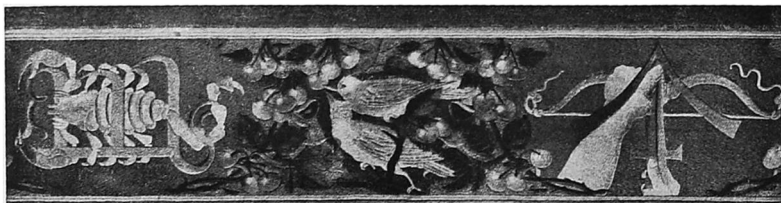


L'HIVER—EMBROIDERED PANEL  
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plays with bunches of grapes hanging from a vine on which is perched a majestic peacock. On the right some dead game expresses the delight of hunting. The pheasant, boar, hare, and wild duck are executed with sumptuous richness of color and extraordinary fidelity. In the border birds picking fruits surround the emblems of the three months of the season. Squirrels play in the trees, and ducks are flying through the reeds.

The artist chose an interior scene to illustrate the subject of "Winter." Two old people are sitting near the fire. A cluster of chrysanthemums, set in a vase, lend a bit of bright coloring to the picture. A child, symbolizing coming life, offers to its grandmother





L'AUTOMNE—DÉTAIL

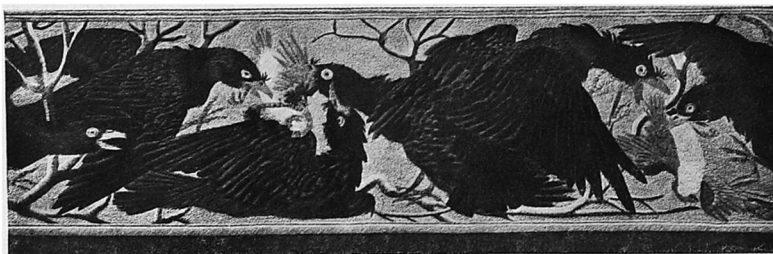
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a bunch of mistletoe, and near by an old man, slumbering, typifies life that is ebbing out. Through the window is seen a landscape of snow rendered in tones of magical naturalness of atmosphere and perspective. The three zodiacal signs are ornamented with the seeds of the poppy, symbolizing the sleep of nature. Benumbed bats hang to branches of ivy and pine, the only growths whose green can withstand the rigorous cold. In the lower part of the panel—the frieze—crows and a bird of prey are fighting for the possession of the bodies of tiny birds.

At intervals, while Mme. de Rudder was at work on the "Four Seasons," she was embroidering a screen for M. Van Etvelde. "Penelope," who undid at night what she had done during the day, is the subject of this composition. The finesse of detail and harmony of coloring which characterize this composition deserve the highest compliment of critical praise.

Japan, for centuries the home of the art of embroidery is, to the detriment of art, producing nothing but effects in miniature.

To Mme. de Rudder must be given credit for the interpretation of work demanding large and varied decorative effect, while in the creation of true artistic composition, she easily stands at the head of the limited coterie of men and women who have mastered this delicate and difficult art. She is a leader in her peculiar craft.



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The genius of this Belgian needlewoman has, in a marked sense, been inherited from her race, and the environment in which she has found herself has contributed to her inspiration and her development. The exquisite embroidery of the Netherlands, which has elicited the admiration of the world, is the direct product of the old guild system which long since passed away. The descendants of these early workers to-day maintain virtually the same practice and possess the same qualities that made their ancestors famous wherever the product of their labor was carried. They have patience, plodding industry, a nice sense of color, a delicate fancy, rare manipulative skill—in a word, all the qualities necessary for excellence in this peculiar art. True, the glory of the early days has in later years been dimmed, but the elements that entered into that glory have never been extinct.

M. P. VERNEUIL.



## ART DEPARTMENTS IN OUR UNIVERSITIES

Let me say just a word apropos the important rôle an art department is destined to play in the future of a university. With the unparalleled growth of the nation during the past decade, on commercial, financial, educational, and industrial lines, our fine arts have kept well abreast, but I regret to state that many of our best and most intelligent citizens seem either unaccountably ignorant of, or at least totally indifferent to, these conditions, and our great seats of learning can serve no better purpose in aiding the cause of American art, and the interests of American artists, than by teaching the coming generation to hold a higher appreciation and love for the fine arts.

While to the professional painter, or the sculptor, the university may not always appeal as a sympathetic and technical atmosphere in which to pursue his studies, and while it may not afford the direct inspiration of the artist-master, it certainly can, in connection with the excellent schools of design in our midst and the treasures of our art museums close at hand, offer very great inducements for a thorough study of art, and a better appreciation of the æsthetic and the beautiful, which are unquestionably most essential qualifications for good citizenship.

The commercial value of artistic character in even the most ordinary productions is to-day recognized by every enlightened manufacturer, and the general cultivation of an art interest among all classes is of the greatest importance to the nation and its material prosperity. For a lengthened period we have annually imported tens of millions' worth of foreign goods, which are superior to articles of similar character made in this country in only one particular, their artistic quality. When considering this fact we cannot but acknowledge the artistic supremacy of a refined nation like France, where a



PÉNÉLOPE  
By Mme. H. de Rudder

